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IMPARTIAL STRICTURES

ON THE POEM CALLED

"THE PURSUITS OF LITERATURE,"

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IMPARIAL STRICTURES

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IMPARTIAL STRICTURES

ON THE POEM CALLED

"THE PURSUITS OF LITERATURE:"

AND PARTICULARLY A

VINDICATION

OF

THE ROMANCE OF *"THE MONK."*

" Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
" Offendar maculis———" HOR.

L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.XCVIII.

IMPARTIAL STRICTURES

THE TRIUMPH OF LITERATURE

VINDICATION

THE ROMANCE OF "THE MONK"



IMPARTIAL STRICTURES

ON THE POEM CALLED

THE PURSUITS OF LITERATURE.

THE advice which Sir Isaac Newton gave Dr. Bentley, that "*he might start a variety of game in every bush, if he would but take the trouble to beat for it,*" is the hint, it appears, from which the Author of "*The Pursuits of Literature,*" who has proved himself a mere cockney sportsman in a pursuit of this nature, has modelled his conduct in the field: for, under the impression of this advice, he immediately sets out with his gun upon his shoulder, determined to beat every bush that he can find; and conceiving *all* birds equally to come under the denomination of game, indiscriminately fires at every thing which crosses him. But though we cannot compliment him on his knowledge as a sportsman, yet the slaughter that he has made excites no small degree of astonishment; for he returns from his pursuit with his game-bag loaded with such a mixture of partridges and sparrows, of pheasants and geese, as plainly shews his determination to compensate for his ignorance as to their *quality*, by the *quantity* of birds that he has killed.

It would not be more impracticable, than it is far from my intention, to attempt a full and minute answer to each indi-

dual topic deserving censure which the Pursuits of Literature contains. My design is merely to give some general Strictures on the style and manner of the Work, with Observations on a few of the most striking passages, in order to shew that the effect and avowed object of it are completely at variance with each other ; as well as to expose a few instances of the illiberal abuse, the personal invective, and the gross misrepresentation in which it abounds.

So much has been said upon this publication, that I should be deterred from adding any observations of my own, did it not appear that those already given have in general been either too much actuated by resentment, or influenced by a prejudice in its favour ; and hence, whilst by some it is not allowed to possess any merit, by others again it is denied to have any faults.

The intentions with which the Author tells us that his book was written, are, admitting those intentions to be sincere, not only just and justifiable, but laudable. I would not even object to the vanity by which they are actuated. A Poet, like a General, ought to believe himself competent to succeed in any undertaking. What I complain of is, that the Author of the Pursuits of Literature abandons his intentions, and acts in a manner totally repugnant to them. He comes forth, as he tells us, (and boldly too he confesses,) in behalf of his country, her literature, her laws, her religion, and her government ; and publishes his Poem from a full conviction of its tendency to promote the public welfare, and that neither the civil nor the religious state of England shall be disturbed nor overthrown, if any observations of his can avail. This intention, it must be acknowledged, is patriotic and praise-worthy. In whatever manner a man endeavours to promote the interest of his country, (and patriotism exhibits itself in various shapes,) be it through the medium of a poem, or by extracting sun-beams from cucumbers, he deserves credit for it. But I much fear, in this instance, the
means

means are inadequate to the design. I speak this with regret. I wish the intentions of the Author of the Pursuits of Literature were realized, and that his poem would turn out to be the great national styptic. The measures intended for our preservation, and those for our destruction, often prove equally abortive. It is not long since that we were told, that the laws, the religion, and the government of the country were to have been overturned by means of a *miraculous float*; when, lo! we have the consolation of seeing miracle opposed to miracle, and a *miraculous poem*, strengthened with a rampart of prose, starts up like a friendly genius to our assistance, and tells us to behold our preserver. In this instance at least the cause of our hope and our apprehension is equally balanced. I am at a loss to which to give the preference, whether to the ingenious invader, or the patriotic protector, of our country; whether to admire most the miraculous raft, or the wonderful poem. Of this I am certain, that the authors of both are deserving of a place in the academy with the national projectors of Laputa.

Yet let me not give to any one more than is justly his due. The Author of the Pursuits of Literature cannot lay claim to the merit of being the first inventor of this πολισφαρμακον, this state nostrum, as it may be called. The idea is neither novel, nor confined to him. I have read somewhere or other of an author long before his time, who, instigated by motives equally patriotic, and a like vanity of his own talents, proposed either to disengage his country from war, or to obtain some other important national advantage, by means of a literary work which he was to publish for that express purpose.

In the Arabian Nights Entertainments, and other books of that description, we frequently see that the repetition of certain cabalistical words works great miracles. And I mention this as a hint to the Author of the Pursuits of Literature to study those words with attention, and endeavour to compose a poem upon the same principle; for if a few words

have produced such astonishing effects, what might we not expect from a whole book written in a similar manner? It must certainly act as a State preservative.

We have likewise an example of these wonder-working words in the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, where, when young Martin had broken his leg, his father Cornelius, sitting a reed and tying the two parts of it to the disjointed place, pronounced these words—"Daries, daries, astataries, disfunapiter, huat, hanat, huat, ista, pista, fista, domi, abo, dam-nauftra." Without meaning to invalidate the efficacy of this mode of treatment, I am compelled to add, that Cornelius was disappointed in his expectations, and found that his charm had no effect. But I would not have the Author of the Pursuits of Literature disheartened at the bad success of Cornelius's experiment, which might possibly arise from a sufficient want of attention to the manner of pronouncing the sanative words, or from the non-observance of some other ceremony that was required.

Some magical books it is requisite to read backwards in order to work the desired effect. Perhaps this may be the case with the Pursuits of Literature. Whether it is so or not I will not undertake to say; I leave it to others to make the experiment.

With regard to the general composition of this Work, it is characterised by that novelty of system, which in other instances the Author so loudly deprecates. He has observed himself, of the Notes, that they are of a structure peculiar to themselves: and it certainly differs not more from the general plan of composition in any thing than it does in this, that the Poetry is read on account of the Notes, whereas in general Notes are only referred to on account of the Poem to which they are annexed. By most authors they are introduced for the sake of explanation; but here they are often given without the least reference or relation to the subject.

In the Poem, considered abstractedly by itself, and independent

pendent of the Notes, there is no great room for commendation. Indeed it is a misapplication of terms to call it a Poem. There is a total want of plan, and an insufficiency both of object and design, necessary to entitle it to that appellation. It is an unconnected rhapsody in rhyme, accompanied with an heterogeneous mass of prose : the disgorgement of a head labouring with much reading, giving very little proof of poetical genius, and no great example of taste.

The Author is certainly a man of abilities and extensive erudition, but he has displayed more learning than natural invention : "*Studium sine divite vena.*" His poetical talents are rather acquired than original. There is a harshness in his versification incompatible with the suavity of genuine poetry. His style in many places resembles that of the late Dr. Johnson, though greatly inferior to it—for the most part correct, and sometimes energetic—but stiff, laboured, and inharmonious. I am not certain that the following lines are entitled to originality of idea, neither are they models of harmonious versification, but they are not devoid of all poetical beauty :

" The bards who once the wreaths of glory wore,
 " Cloth'd in translucent veil their wond'rous lore ;
 " The tales they sung a willing age believ'd,
 " Charm'd into truth, and without guile deceiv'd :
 " Where'er they rov'd, young fancy and the muse
 " Wav'd high their mirror of a thousand hues ;
 " They gaz'd ; and as in varying guise pourtray'd,
 " Aërial phantoms hov'ring round them play'd,
 " Gave to each fleeting form that shot along
 " Existence everlasting as their song ;
 " And as by Nature's strength the tablet grew,
 " Rapture the pencil guided as they drew."

The lines too on Catcot in the first part, on Roscoe in the second, the description of his Muse, and his character of a Poet,

Poet, in the fourth, are above mediocrity. I would also instance, as though last not least, the six concluding lines of the fourth part :

“ Go warn in solemn accents, bold and brief,
 “ The slumb’ring Minister, and factious Chief ;
 “ Mourn proudest empires prostrate in the dust,
 “ Tiaras, fanes and pontiffs, crown and bust ;
 “ And last, as through the smould’ring flames you turn,
 “ Snatch the palladium though the temple burn.”

These lines, with some few others which I could select, are in a style of composition by no means contemptible ; but the generality of his poetry is stiff and inelegant, and many passages extremely low and poor. It would be too great a compliment to apply to him what Mitchell said on perusing Pope’s beautiful Essay :

“ Beauties and faults so thick lie scatter’d here ;
 “ Those I could read, if these were not so near.”

With more justice we may add—“ Nil fuit unquam sic impar tibi,”—for his style is by no means equal or regular ; and when he does soar for a time, it is only to make the rapidity of his descent again the more astonishing :

“ Tolluntur in altum, ut lapsu graviore cadant.”

What can be poorer than these lines for example :

“ Hold ; now is it well
 “ In strains like these of manuscripts to tell ?
 “ Of notes, bonds, deeds, receipts, fac-similies,
 “ And all that lawyers feign for proper fees ?”

Or these,

“ Enough for me great Shakespear’s word to hear,
 “ Though but in common with the vulgar ear,
 “ Without

" Without one note, or horn-book in my head,
 " Ritson's coarse trash, or lumber of the dead ;
 " When flippant wit, and book-learn'd confidence
 " Alone give right to science, taste, and sense ;
 " When modest worth by idle boasting's shewn,
 " Then, nor till then, will I approve Malone."

Again,

" Ask where Rome's church is founded ? On a steep
 " Which Heresy's wild winds in vain may sweep ;
 " Alone where sinners may have rest secure,
 " One only undefil'd, one only pure.
 " Blame you her cumbrous pomp, her iron rod,
 " Or trumpery relicks of her saints half shod ?
 " Lo confessors, in every hamlet found,
 " With sacred sisters walk their cloister'd round !
 " There read the list ; and calm the fate expect,
 " When crafty, meddling, thankless priests direct.
 " Think you their hate unquench'd can e'er expire ?
 " The torch not tipt with sleeping sulphurous fire ?"

These verses would be struck out of the weekly theme of a common school-boy.

And again,

" Sooner the peoples' right shall Horsley teach,
 " In judgment delicate, with prudence preach,
 " And o'er his bosom broad forget to spread
 " Bath's dangling pride, and ribband rosy red."

This too,

" Will Pitt with honest Harry lov'd his port."

If this poetry is only offered to those who are conversant in the strength, simplicity, and dignity of Dryden and Pope, I apprehend the offering will not be received as *Μυσάων ἱερῆ-δοσις*.

δοσις. They will be inclined to refuse it in the same words that Horace makes Telemachus reply to Menelaus ;

“ —Magis apta tibi tua dona relinquam *.”

Nor can any thing be poorer than the affectation at wit and alliteration in these lines, not to mention that they mean just nothing :

“ ’Tis Grey and grumbling, Curwen all and clatter ;
“ And Dent and dogs ; and pewter, pot, and platter.”

They are evidently a bad imitation of the following lines in the Dunciad :

“ ’Twas chatt’ring, grinning, mouthing, jabb’ring all,
“ And noise and Norton, Brangling and Breval,
“ Dennis and dissonance,” &c.†

He has likewise displayed a share of vanity, of egotism, of pedantry, and self-conceited importance, almost without a parallel. It was not impolitic in him to attempt to vindicate the “ fume superbiam ” of a Poet, when he had assumed so large a portion to his own share. He regards the works of other authors in the same manner as Cestius did the eloquence of Cicero, which he accounted as nothing in comparison of his own. According to his account his work appears to be the universal Panacea, containing, as he tells us, “ principles of government, polity, religion, morality, education, criticism, poetry, and literature.” This puts me in mind of those quacks who puff their own medicines as an infallible remedy against all diseases, whether gout, dropsy, rheumatism, scurvy, cholic, sickness, p—x, quinzey, indigestion, tumors, weakness, eruptions, &c.

The intimate connection which he tells us there is between literature and government, he instances by attempting

* Hor. ep. 7, l. 1.

† Dunciad, l. 2. v. 237.

to prove that this country is upheld both in her civil and religious state by the influence of his Poem. And I doubt not it is, in his opinion, a proper subject to meet the liberality of Mr. Pitt, whom he so severely censures for not taking literary men under his protection; as if every rhyming songster and scribbling pamphleteer should immediately be requited with a pension or a place. Whenever the Author of the Pursuits of Literature shall work the salvation of the country by his miraculous Poem, there can be but one opinion as to his deserving an ample remuneration. Englishmen are generous, and love to see their benefactors rewarded; but they would not look upon it as any proof that Mr. Pitt had profited much by the exhortation to economy given him by the Author of the Pursuits of Literature, were he to establish a public office for the purpose of giving salaries to every applicant who should produce his own trash, and claim a reward for it; nor would they agree with him in thinking it necessary that a Minister should become the paymaster-general to Authors and Poets; but, on the contrary, believe him much better employed in attending to the affairs of the State.

I must acknowledge, moreover, that in this instance, amongst others, I do not perceive "that uniformity of thought and design," which the Author of the Pursuits of Literature tells us we shall find in his Poem. In one part he laments the little encouragement which Literature, and particularly Poetry, often meets with, and gives many instances of men of genius and talents who have been passed by and neglected; but afterwards he makes Octavius observe, "that the proper, constant, and undeviating application of time, learning, and talents, *must* ultimately resist the malignity of criticism, *and rise superior to every temporary neglect*, in any department of *Literature*, of Government, or of Society." There is certainly a palpable contradiction between these passages; for if it be true that "the proper, constant, and undeviating application of time, learning, and talents," in Literature,

" must rise superior to every temporary neglect," the want of patronage and encouragement which authors so often experience would cease to be a circumstance to be lamented. Neither does this assertion receive any confirmation from the lines wherein he asks,

" Have you not seen *neglected Penrose* bloom,
 " Then sink *unhonoured* in a village tomb?"

or when he tells us,

" To worth *untitled* would your fancy turn?
 " The Muse *all friendless* weeps o'er Mickle's urn."

And again, when he represents the Rev. Thomas Maurice, author of " Indian Antiquities," and of the " History of Indostan, its arts and its sciences, as connected with the history of the other great empires of Asia, during the most ancient periods;" declaring in his dedication, that " this history, commenced under the patronage of the Court of East India Directors, is dedicated to them, in humble hopes of their continued support of a work, *which must sink without that support*;" this certainly cannot be admitted as any proof " that the proper, constant, and undeviating application of time, learning, and talents," in Literature, " must rise superior to every temporary neglect." It is true, that we sometimes see the works of genius experience from posterity that justice which the authors of them in vain sought to obtain; but I wish that a little more justice was done to the man when living, as well as to his productions when he is no more. It is an object of much and serious regret to behold the neglect which men of letters have experienced from the world. The patronage of Literature is more peculiarly the province of the Great, who have no other occupation to attend to; and yet there is scarcely an instance where a man has been able to acquire an independence by means of the patronage which his literary talents have procured him. There may be several who have benefited

benefited themselves, and risen by their own exertions to great eminence ; but I cannot recollect one, who was in *absolute want*, that could ever find sufficient patronage to *ensure a decent subsistence*. Pope, for example, met with great patronage, and made a fortune ; but then his fortune arose from the sale of his works, and not from the liberality of his patrons. Neither was he *in want* ; for though he could not be said to be rich, yet he was originally possessed of an independence. Addison seems to afford an instance to the contrary of my assertion ; but I believe, that although his patrimony was very limited, yet he also possessed wherewith to maintain himself. His family too was good, and his interest not without some weight ; and add to this a number of fortuitous circumstances, which all conspired to promote him in life. But of those who absolutely wanted bread, how few could ever obtain it ? Butler, Otway, Chatterton, Gay, Savage, and Burns, with many others, could not live on their patronage. The three first are even said to have perished for want of food ; and the others died extremely distressed in their circumstances. And though there might not be in them all the same “ proper, constant, “ and undeviating application of time, learning, and talents,” nor might all have been equally unfortunate, yet there was not one that could “ rise superior to the temporary neglect,” which each of them more or less experienced, or that was able, as Rousseau somewhere says, “ to revenge the cause of injured merit “ on the cruelty of fortune.” Dryden himself, with all his patronage, continued poor to the time of his death ; and whenever a *necessitous* author has acquired a decent subsistence, it has generally been from the sale of his works, and not through the liberality of the Great, whose sole patronage too frequently consists in a common and unprofitable acquaintance with the very men whom they profess to hold in the highest degree of admiration, and whose company they seek out of an ostentatious vanity, but to whose necessities they will not afford the smallest relief,

Had it not been for the Notes, the "Pursuits of Literature" would soon have died away and sunk into oblivion. To them it owes the circulation which it has experienced; and that not so much on account of the information which they convey, as the scandal and abuse which they contain. Scandal is a never palling food to the public taste: we attend but too eagerly to the abuse of our neighbour; and though sensible at the time of its falsehood, we cannot help listening to the report,

If it be not to this, to what can we attribute the success of the Work? There are some few of the Notes wherein we meet with an acuteness of observation and a depth of learning. In others, again, there is such a happy vein of irony, and such a keenness of satire, as cannot fail of delighting the reader. The zeal and ability which he has displayed in the cause of his religion, and the ingenuity of his criticisms on the works of sceptical writers, can receive no additional weight from any praise that I can bestow upon them; and I shall therefore only add, that I wish every part of his Work was equally well entitled to applause. There is a peculiar ingenuity and admirable ridicule in his remarks on Godwin's Works; and I cannot but acquiesce with him in the force and propriety of the greatest part of his observations upon the * Roman Catholic Priests.

* It is not that I am an advocate any more for national than private inhumanity; for I would neither have the distinction of religion, of politics, or of country, made the pretence for withholding our assistance from those who were in distress. But humanity should not be destitute of prudence. We have received among us a number of persons compelled to seek refuge from a bitter and sanguinary persecution which awaited them in their native country, and who, without suspecting them of any peculiar prejudice against this country, cannot but be supposed strongly attached to the religion they have been bred in, and the land which gave them birth. It is known that no oppression is able to obliterate the love of our native soil: it survives alike every change of time and situation.

† Nescio quâ natale solum dulcedine cunctos

† Ducit et immemores haud finit esse spi.' OVID.

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Priests. The panegyrics too which he has bestowed upon Messrs. Bryant, Roscoe, Melmoth, Cowper and Sullivan, with some few others, are dictated by judgment, and expressed with elegance. But these constitute a very small portion of the Work. There are many other parts either bombastic and pedantic, or dull, uninteresting, and prolix. His attempts at witticism too frequently end in low buffoonery and ridiculous conceits. Some anecdote is interspersed here and there; but the majority is composed of personal abuse, or school-boy declamation. In his ideas of satire he appears to be totally mistaken. Scandal and satire are widely distinct in their natures; yet he often supplies the want of the one by the aid of the other. There is no satire, for example, in the abuse which

We have seen this particularly exemplified in the case of the French Emigrants. Independent therefore of any danger to be apprehended from their disseminating principles of religion inimical to the established system among us, I will state this question, in addition to the arguments used by the Author of the Pursuits of Literature, for the consideration of the Legislative body, Whether, in the supposed event of an invasion, it is not likely that many of them, forgetting the principles of gratitude by which they are, or rather ought to be, actuated, and in the hopes of effecting terms of reconciliation for themselves, added to that invincible attachment to the *natale solum*, would not take up arms against us, and sting the bosom in which they have been fostered? It may be said that Government had this in view when they directed some late measures, but I contend they have not pursued their precautions with sufficient energy. General national prejudices are often illiberal, and it must be confessed that there are many worthy individuals in the body alluded to: but the suspicion I have stated is certainly grounded on motives stronger than mere simple conjecture. The behaviour of many of them warrants this belief. Among the number of circumstances that have come to my knowledge, of the improper, or, I may with more justice add, infamous conduct of some of them, I will only adduce the following:—A short time back an Emigrant went to look at some lodgings at the West end of the Town, where, after stating that it was for a French family, he was informed by the Lady of the house that she had particular reasons for declining the letting her lodgings to Foreigners: to which he answered, she might do as she pleased, but that before long she would be glad to take them herself of the French.

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he has lavished on Mr. Erskine or Dr. Warton ; nor, whatever opinion we may entertain of the man, does the epithet *detestable*, when coming from the pen of a scholar and a poet, convey any satire though attached to such a name as Thomas Paine, nor detract from the merits of such a writer as Peter Pindar. In common with others, though he can see the faults of his neighbours, yet he appears not less blind to his own. He has criticised with asperity on what he calls a vulgarity of style in Dr. Warton's Life of Pope, and at the same time furnished many instances of a greater vulgarity in his own. What otherwise shall we call this—" Mr. *Barrister* Erskine is "famous for taking opium in large quantities." And again, " My poor pockets cannot keep up with these usings demands upon them." " I cry your mercy, good Master Steevens." Nor can, " Is it not so, Mr. Professor ?" nor, " my dear little " Daniel"—nor, " my learned Master Richard Porson"—nor, " My dear Adam"—be considered as examples either of satire or elegance of style. It is not a little remarkable, too, that the very expression which in Dr. Warton he censures as vulgar and defective, he has in various places adopted himself, " One " would think that this dog was of Canidia's breed."—" To " hear Mr. Fox as I perpetually do in the House, one would " really think he was a rival to Vestris or Didelot."—" I have " no doubt of Lord S.'s friendship for Mr. Gibbon, but why " hang up one's friend in effigy ?" &c.

His quotations also, of which those from the Greek are in general selected with the greatest aptness, are poured upon us in torrents, but frequently without enlivening the style or elucidating the subject ; many of them with very little, and some with no application at all ; merely to shew the extent of the writer's classical researches, and his acquaintance with the authors of antiquity *. For instance—after telling us that

* And yet I have remarked, that more ability is often conceded to an author, by many of his readers, on account of the number and variety of his

that Mr. Steevens is not quite original in the expression, *that his verses are only a peg to hang his Notes upon*—as a confirmation of that assertion, he adds, that Pindar said long before Mr. Steevens, Ἀπο πασσαλῆς φόρμιγγα λαμβάνε—the English of which is, *Take the harp from the peg*. How this applies to Mr. Steevens's observation, I am at a loss to discover. He might with equal propriety have attempted to prove plagiarism on Mr. Steevens, because Varro has said, "Novum cribrum novo paxillo pendeat *."

With regard likewise to his exposition of the passage from St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, I cannot give him credit for that ingenuity which is generally attributed to him. His remark, though professedly a matter of mere conjecture, is not even a conjectural probability. For, allowing the *penula* to have been so specifically a Roman garment, and worn only by Romans, it is not likely that St. Paul would have thought that the sending for a garment which he had not with him when he was apprehended, would be admitted as any proof of his citizenship. If proof was necessary, such slight evidence as this, he must have been sensible, would not have been re-

his quotations, than from any other supposed excellence of his work. Quotations, however, are certainly no indications of genius, nor even always a proof of learning; for it is possible for a man to quote a great deal, who has read very little: the merit consists not in the quantity, but in the just application of what he quotes. I do not wish to be understood as insinuating any doubt of the learning of the Author of the Pursuits of Literature, from the want of such application in many of the quotations which he has given, though whenever we find one made use of by an author that is impertinent, or irrelevant to the subject matter, it leads us to conclude he did not understand it himself; but I must say I shrewdly suspect this to be the case with some of those who are the loudest in their commendation.

* Or he might have told us that Homer said before Pindar,

Ἀπὸ πασσαλῆς ἀγκύλας τήξα

ἤματι τῷ ἰδομεν—

Hom. Il. l. 5. v. 109.

ceived.

ceived. And then as to his books and parchments :—What documents or diploma could he have with him to elucidate this subject? St. Paul was a *freeman born*, as he tells us himself in his answer to the chief captain, owing, as it is supposed by some, to the city of Tarsus, a native of which he was, having the right of Roman citizens ; though it is doubted by many whether it possessed that privilege in the time of St. Paul : and, as some confirmation of that doubt, I will suggest, that when St. Paul tells the chief captain, that he is “ a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city,” it does not gain him any attention or respect, insomuch that the chief captain commands him to be scourged notwithstanding this assertion ; and it is not till he declares that he is a “ Roman,” to the centurion, that the chief captain orders him to be released. Either therefore the chief captain must have been totally ignorant of the privilege granted to the city of Tarsus, if such was the case, which I cannot think very probable ; or St. Paul must have acquired his freedom in some other manner, or rather his father before him, for he says he was born free.

The only documents therefore that it appears likely St. Paul could produce would have been an authentication of his birth, or his father's citizenship, which if, through any apprehension of his having occasion for it, he had been at the pains to have obtained, it is not rational to suppose he would have left behind him. Besides, his letter does not seem to express that he was in any material haste for them as being necessary evidence ; for though in one part he says “ use thy diligence to come shortly,” yet he afterwards adds “ use thy diligence to come before winter.” So vague and indefinite a mode of expression as *come before winter*, does not certainly imply that anxiety which the necessity of producing his cloak and papers, as evidence for him, could not have failed to occasion.

I must also observe, that there is a difference of opinion both as to the derivation and meaning of the word *φελόνη*, or

φαιλονη,

φαιδώνη, which signifies the cloak: some considering it, with the Author of the Pursuits of Literature, as a corruption for φαινόλη, which is said to be derived from φαίνω, quia φαίνεται ὁλος, though by others it is derived from φελλος, cortex. By many it is held to be an original Greek word; others again look upon it (i. e. φαινόλη) as a word *grecised*, from the Latin *pænula*. Then as to its signification—though by most it is understood to signify a cloak or coat, yet there are some who think it means a chest, or little box, which might contain things of importance; and others who interpret it by a roll, or parchment. But this latter interpretation does not seem very probable; for as St. Paul afterwards mentions the parchments, *μεμβράναι*, if by φελώνη we are also to understand parchments, it would only be a repetition of the same thing.

It may not be perhaps totally unacceptable to the reader, if I lay before him, as a mere matter of curiosity, one or two of the various conjectures upon the word *pænula*:

“A Lacedæmoniis est petita cujus inventores primos dixit Tertullianus. Theatra enim, quia tectis carebant, ut non sine molestiâ ludis interesse spectatores possent, tempore præsertim hyberno, Lacedæmonii, ut et voluptatibus indulgerent, et arcendo frigori pares essent, pænulam invenere primi. Horum postea morem Romani sunt imitati.” This passage occurs in the “Lexicon Antiquitatum Romanorum, auctore Samuele Pitisco;” and is there stated as a quotation from Suetonius.

But the most curious reading is to be found in the Lexicon Matthei Martini, as a quotation from Haymo *:

“Pænula vestis erat consularis, quâ induebantur consules Romani, quum ingrediebantur in curiam. Sed fortè quærit aliquis, quomodo vel unde acciderit hoc genus vestimenti

* Haymo, or as he is otherwise called Haimo or Heimo, a German monk, and afterwards bishop of Halberstadt, who flourished in the ninth century, and wrote, besides other things, some Commentaries on the Books of the Old and New Testament.

“ B. Apostolo ? Cui respondendum est, Romanos ante ad-
 “ ventum Domini hunc habuisse morem, sive consuetudinem,
 “ quum monarchiam totius orbis sibi acquirebant, ut quæcun-
 “ que gens eis cum pace et coronis occurrisset, darent ei li-
 “ bertatē, in tantum, ut eorum fratres dicerentur, civesque
 “ Romani appellarentur. Dabantque eis potestatem ædifi-
 “ candi curiam, et habere consules, sicut et illi habebant. Pa-
 “ ter igitur Pauli de Giscalii oppido terræ repromissionis fuit,
 “ ubi natus, translatus est in Tarsum Ciliciæ. Quodam tem-
 “ pore venientibus Romanis per Ciliciam occurrit eis ipse cum
 “ aliis Tarsensibus ; utpote, qui nobilis inter illos habebatur,
 “ accepitque eos cum pace. Tunc dederunt ipsis libertatem
 “ supra dictam, et potestatem ædificandi curiam, vestesque
 “ induere consulares, ut pænulati intrarent in curiam, more
 “ Romanorum, ibique pater B. Pauli pænulam accipere meruit
 “ causâ dignitatis. Post cujus mortem apostolus ob memoriam
 “ ejus recordationis hanc vestem sibi retinuit.”

With this latter also corresponds in part, that is, as to its
 being a consular garment, a passage to be found in Primasii
 Episcopi Africani Divi Augustini quondam discipuli, in Divi
 Pauli ad Timot. Commentar.* where he saith, “ Pænula vestis
 “ erat consularis antiquorum Romanorum ; quam pænulam
 “ non dixit fuisse suam : potuit. n. ad eam pedes apostoli inter
 “ cætera aliquis conversus à fidem Christi posuisse vendendā.”

All these conjectures, however, as well as that of the Author
 of the Pursuits of Literature, favour more of a speculative and
 needless supposition †, than any reasonable opinion. The

* Magna Bibliotheca Patrum. Edit. Paris. 1654.

I have given the words of this passage as I found them ; but there ap-
 pears to be some error in the latter part.

† The prevailing passion of one sort of scholars is to discover *new mean-
 ings* in the author, whom they will cause to appear mysterious, purely for
 the vanity of being thought to unravel him.

Pope's Notes on the Iliad, b. 1.

meaning

meaning or force of the passage in question is sufficiently intelligible in the literal acceptation of the sense of it, without attempting to distort from it a meaning unwarranted by reason or probable conjecture.

But the criticisms of the Author of the Pursuits of Literature (if such they are to be called) are not more tinged with vanity than actuated by illiberality, as well as too often made use of as the vehicles for unmerited slander and ungenerous observations. It may be said of him, what Homer relates of Thersites :

Ὅς ῥ' ἔπεα φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἄκοσμά τε πολλὰ τε ἤδη,
Μαψατὰρ ἐκὰτ' ἀκόσμον ἐριζέμεναι——*.

What can be further removed from candour and decency than his treatment of Dr. Warton? What more devoid of delicacy and truth than his remarks on Lady Charlotte Campbell? How unjust his behaviour to Mr. Steevens? How illiberal his observations on Mr. Coxe? How offensive is the abusive language in which he conveys his attack on Mr. Erskine?—"What think you, Mr. Barrister Erskine?" "How say you, Mr. Barrister?" might do very well as the language of an orange-girl, or a Covent-garden chairman; but it is beneath the conduct of a Scholar and a Gentleman to stoop to such low abuse. He did not learn this either from Demosthenes or Cicero, whom he admires so much. He will neither find it in the Philippics of the one, nor the celebrated Oration *pro Milone* of the other. The whole of his Note upon Mr. Erskine is in the same style, Νεικεῖν ἐθέλησι χολωτοῖσιν ἐπέσσειν. Besides, the charges which he prefers against that Gentleman are singular enough, namely, that he is *famous* for taking opium in large quantities; that, in his opinion, he has too large a portion of the leprosy of eloquence; and, in addition to all this, has written what the Author of the Pursuits

* Hom. Il. 2. v. 213.

of Literature styles "a flimsy and puerile view" of the causes and consequences of the present French War. For all this he has thought fit to abuse him most liberally. But his arrows are shot from too *weak* a bow to inflict any wound :

Ὁ δ' ἄλιον βέλος ἦκεν. —

— πάλιν δ' ἀπὸ χαλκὸς ὄρυσσε

βλημένῳ, ὃδ' ἐπερήσσε — *

However indignant we may feel at the malice with which they are pointed, yet we have the satisfaction of knowing that they are neither unerring, and like those of Pandarus *μελαινῶν ἔρμ' ὀδυνάων*, nor fatal, like the "lethalis arundo" of Virgil's Shepherd, but impotent as the "telum imbellis fine ictu" of the aged Priam. Mr. Erskine stands too high in the public estimation to receive any prejudice from the puny though abusive attacks of an anonymous writer. His faults or his foibles, whatever they may be, (and what man is there without some?) will not cast a veil over those great talents which are so deservedly acknowledged and so universally admired.

Mr. Canning also is made the object of an invidious attack; because, though a young man, his abilities have promoted him to a conspicuous situation; an honour that becomes the greater in proportion to the youth of the person who fills it, if his talents are competent to the execution of the office. But here again, as in many other instances, he forgets himself; and what is the subject of an invidious reflection in one, is made in another the grounds of the most excessive commendation. In a former part he takes the opportunity of lavishing the utmost encomiums on Mr. Pitt, because "he passed at once into the innermost of the Temple, without treading the vestibule, in the bloom and vigor of his faculties, *and in the prime of life*:"—and yet Mr. Canning is abused because at as early a period he is made an Under Secretary of State.

* Il. l. 15. v. 575. l. 27. v. 593.

Neither is Dr. Darwin treated with the candour which he merits. In so voluminous and extensive a Work as the *Zoonomia* and the *Botanick Garden*, notwithstanding the many poetical beauties which it contains, and the specimen of taste and science which it exhibits, there cannot fail to be some (if not many) faults. His style may be sometimes inflated, and his imagery not always correct; and when the exuberance of a bold and vigorous imagination, warm with an enthusiastic ardour in philosophical researches, has tempted him to soar beyond the customary height in the expansive region of physics, and leave the astonished reader gazing at him from below, we are induced to wish he would curb the impetuosity of his ideas——

“Fortius utere loris.”——

But I respect the daring mind, that, undaunted at the difficulty, courts with alacrity every opportunity of speculative enquiry; nor will I laugh because the boldness of his ideas outstrips the narrow limits of my comprehension. What I do understand, I am not more instructed than pleased with; and I understand enough to admire the genius, and the learning, and the uncommon knowledge, of which he has given so convincing a proof.

Dr. Warton is also made the subject of the most unmerited slander and illiberal abuse, for having gratified the literary world with a new and complete edition of Pope's Works; wherein, to the Notes of former Editors and Commentators, he has added most of his own remarks, which appeared before in the form of an Essay, and now reduced into the shape of Notes, together with many additional ingenious criticisms and observations.

“Better to disappoint the public hope,
 “Like Warton driveling on the page of Pope;
 “While o'er the ground that Warburton once trode,
 “The Winton pedant shakes his little rod,

“Content

“Content his own stale scraps to steal or glean,
 “Hash’d up and season’d with an old man’s spleen.”

I should have thought that the *spleen* with which these lines are *hashed* up would have been sufficient without the *seasoning* of the Notes which are added to them.

It is no detraction, however, from the real merit of any of his Notes, that they have appeared, though in a different shape, before. If they are good in one form, they will not be less so in another.

Dr. Warton never held out to the world any thing to raise in them very high expectations of his Work. What expectations therefore the world might have formed, from their knowledge of so learned and able an Editor, I know not; but I will venture to assert, that the Work is fully answerable to the highest that could have been reasonably entertained about it.—To the abuse heaped on him by the Author of the Pursuits of Literature, Dr. Warton may reply in the words of Pope, who, in one of his letters, thus speaks of some railing papers against the *Odyssy*: “If the book has merit, it will extinguish all such nasty scandal; as the sun puts an end to stinks, merely by coming out.”

Much of the accusation preferred against him is of too contemptible a nature to merit any serious notice. The charge of indecency, and boldness, and assurance, will not find much credit with those who know any thing of Dr. Warton; and those who are unacquainted with him will require better proof before they accede to it; for they cannot but discern how weakly the charge is supported by the evidence that is adduced. In the imitation of the Second Satire of the First Book of Horace, Pope has not more closely followed the severity of the style, than the boldness of the language of the Roman Satyrist: but it is a sufficient answer to an accusation of this nature to say, that what Pope thought fit to write, Dr. Warton might very safely publish. I will only add, that,
 in

in my opinion, the Satire in question is in strictness much chaster than the story of January and May, or the first of the imitations from Chaucer, which have always been printed with the rest of Pope's Works.

Objections have been made against some of the editions of this Poet, for *not* containing all his Works. Now one is given that is complete, it is cavilled at because it is so. How is an Editor to suit every different taste?

He may say,

“ Quid dem? quid non dem?”

But he will find after all that he has not pleased every one—

“ Non omnes eadem mirantur amanti.”

I have derived much pleasure and information, I acknowledge, from the perusal of Dr. Warton's Work. His Life of Pope is written in a plain, easy, and not unanimated style, uniting, in a short compass, the observations of the man of learning to the accuracy and impartiality of the historian. The Notes are learned, judicious, and instructive; the obvious result of much close attention, and laborious investigation. At the same time, might I be permitted to venture an opinion, I think some of his allusions appear to be overstrained, and he is too minute in some of his remarks. But these partial blemishes are insufficient to detract from the real merits of the Work, which are certainly very great.

The chief objection of the Author of the “Pursuits of Literature” to Dr. Warton, seems to be grounded on the circumstance of his being a schoolmaster, and then as if by a natural conclusion incompetent to the Work he had taken in hand; but it really appears to be not a more singular than ridiculous argument, to allege, as an instance of the incapacity of a man for a literary undertaking, that of his having presided at the head of one of the most learned seminaries of the kingdom. The frequent repetition too of the word schoolmaster, of which he makes use, is excessively low and poor;
and

and his very years, so far from commanding the respect to which they are entitled, are not exempt from the shafts of ridicule, but his age is treated with insolent contempt.

The commendation even which he has bestowed upon Voltaire, affords another subject for animadversion to the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature," who is too illiberal himself to allow to the genius and abilities of the man, the merit which, notwithstanding his principles, he is certainly entitled to. But his insinuation against Dr. Warton, wherein he pretends to *discern the under-murmurings of a spurious, bastard, half republicanism*, because the Doctor commends the passage in which Virgil had the courage to represent his hero assisting the Etruscans in punishing their tyrannical king, is one of the most scandalous though pitiful insinuations that the malicious efforts of the pen of detraction ever produced. It is a masterpiece of refinement in the arts of calumny and slander.

Quo dente obnitens spinosa calumnia pugnet—"

This passage militates against the very sentiments which he has himself laid down on the subject. It is censure, without discrimination. It is a depreciating declamation against learning, wit and talents, and high station. It is such as "a gentleman would refuse to write, or a man of virtue to admit into his thoughts : it violates the high, and discriminating, and honourable, and directing principles of human conduct." It is neither just, nor justifiable. It is scandalous in the extreme ; I will not undertake to say that it is not libellous. It is sufficient for me to have pointed it out ; and it only remains for him to erase it as he has declared he will do.

Not that Dr. Warton need to shrink from such scurrilous and illiberal remarks as these are :

Quum tu rectè vivas, ne cures verba malorum :
Arbitrii non est nostri quid quisque loquatur *.

* Dion. Caton. Distich.

Neither his moral, nor his political, nor his literary character stand in any danger. Through the many years of his well-spent life the two former have never yet been questioned; and as to the latter, this last production would be alone sufficient to remove any doubt on the subject, and place him, where he so eminently deserves to be, in the foremost rank of learned and judicious Commentators. I am sensible that this defence of Dr. Warton, if such it is worthy to be called, is by no means necessary. His Work itself is the best refutation of any thing that can be said against it; but I cannot refrain from contributing my small mite towards the general applause which it has obtained *.

I cannot conclude this without noticing, that in my opinion the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" is much more appositely rewarded for his observations on this subject with the "grey goose plume" nodding on his head, as he tells us, than he would be if crowned with the "*delphicâ lauro*." His choice in this respect is well suited to his desert—"Sint
" *hic etiam sua præmia*."

Another idle objection is founded on the engravings of the figures of Mr. Gibbon and Mr. Pope, which Lord Sheffield and Dr. Warton have affixed to the respective editions of the Works of those two Authors. The revenge, however, which he has adopted is whimsical enough; for he lampoons the men, on account of their portraits being given to the world by their Editors, because nature had made them ugly and deformed. His lines are these——

"Of beauteous Gibbon's fair proportion'd shape,
"An old baboon, or fœtus of an ape,"——

And again of Pope——

"Nor e'en the bard's deformity can 'scape,
"His pictur'd person and his libell'd shape."

* See the very spirited and able defence of Dr. Warton, by the Author of the Progress of Satire.

There is neither wit nor satire in these lines in the manner they are introduced, nor in his notes upon them. It requires no great sagacity to discern that the value of a portrait depends upon its resemblance to the person for whom it was intended; and it certainly would be highly ridiculous to publish as the likeness of a man, what bears no likeness to him at all. How far the portraits of Mr. Gibbon or of Mr. Pope are correct as to their resemblance, I cannot pretend to determine; but it does not strike me as being any thing ridiculous in endeavouring to give to posterity the picture of a man whose works must necessarily introduce him to their acquaintance. There is a natural curiosity which disposes us even to be pleased with the artificial personification of great men. The Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" is a scholar and an historian. As such, does he not, I would ask him, derive satisfaction from contemplating the bust of a Trajan or a Marcus Aurelius? And whence does that satisfaction arise? Certainly not from the age of the marble solely, nor can I suppose merely from the beauty or deformity of a sculptured face, but, by presenting to him the semblance of a great man, whose every action is an object of curiosity, the various transactions and events which accompanied his time rush upon the mind, and create a train of busy ideas and conjectural reflections. Why then may not others derive an equal pleasure from any attempt to lay before them the portraits of great men of their own time, more interesting often because their history and their merits are better understood?

How does all this accord, I would ask, with the following declaration, which in one part of his Work he has thought fit to make, "Far pleasanter to me is the language of commendation than of censure?" Is the public welfare promoted by an indiscriminate abuse levelled against genius and abilities of every description? Do the literature, the laws, the religion, the government, and the good manners of the country derive any support from an endeavour to depreciate the abilities,

lities, the learning, and the morals of the best, the wisest, and the greatest of her sons?

After witnessing attacks of this description, and the severity with which he has censured the style of others, we should expect at least to find this *censor morum* peculiarly attentive to the chastity and delicacy of his own. What then shall we say of the following passage?

“ On the luxurious lap of Flora thrown,
 “ On beds of yielding vegetable down,
 “ Raise lust in pinks, and with unhallow’d fire
 “ Bid the soft virgin violet expire.”

I will not absolutely say that these lines are indecent; but I will ask, Whether they are in due consonance with that extreme love for delicacy, and chastity of expression, which he professes. But it is the licensed language of Satire, we shall be told. Ah! is it so? How then came Dr. Warton to be so severely reprehended for only *publishing* the Satires of Pope? Surely Pope was at least entitled to an equal latitude of expression with the Author of the “Pursuits of Literature.”

To the above passage he has, by way of illustration I suppose, added the following Note: “I would just hint that it is a matter of some curiosity to me to conceive how young Ladies are instructed in the terms of Botany, *which are very significant.*” He was under the influence of the “grey goose plume,” I doubt not, when he was writing this Note; but I would advise him in future, when he can suggest no better hints than these, to keep them to himself. The suppression of this Note too would have concealed his ignorance in this respect, which he has been at some pains to render conspicuous. For the terms of Botany (of which it is plain he knows nothing) have no impropriety in themselves, and may with the most perfect safety be taught to the most delicate female ear. It is unnecessary to ask him, Whether he has ever read Rousseau’s elegant Letters to a Lady on the Elements of Botany?

The above passage sufficiently shews he has not. The works and operations of nature, if expressed with some little attention to the terms, convey nothing offensive or indelicate to an innocent mind. There is an old proverb, which says, "Honi soit qui mal y pense." Does the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" understand this?

In his observations again on Mr. Knight's Essay on the Worship of Priapus, his professions and his writing are widely at variance with each other, and, in the Note which accompanies these two lines, not the most chaste in themselves :

"In verse half-veil'd raise titillating lust,

"Like girls that deck with flow'rs Priapus' bust."

He is guilty of a gross indelicacy and indecency, if what he says of Mr. Knight be true. Mr. Knight's Treatise he reprehends as being both unbecoming and indecent, but at the same time acknowledges *it has not been published*; and therefore, fearful lest the public should be ignorant of the contents, he immediately gives a long description of it in suitable terms. What are the real merits and faults, and whether or not there is in fact such indecency in this learned Treatise, I do not pretend to determine, as I have never seen it; but I confess it is not a little extraordinary to see a man professing himself the champion of literary delicacy, and scrutinizing with severity the least ambiguity of expression in others, enter into a general exposition of what he calls an indecent Treatise, and which he commences with telling us we cannot be acquainted with because it has not been published. It can only be therefore through apprehension that it should remain unnoticed by the public, that his observations upon it were written, as a sort of "in perpetuam rei memoriam," as it were, and, as he elsewhere observes, "*though for no other cause, yet for this, that posterity may know that we have not loosely, through silence, permitted things to pass away as in a dream.*"

Again,

Again,

“Some plain position lay, as simply thus—

“Marriage consists in actu-coitus.”

For this and other places, “where he has been obliged to use expressions rather strong,” as he terms it, on account of the impossibility of giving an effectual exposure of the unwarrantable and scandalous licence of some writers without it, he has made a sort of an apology, by introducing the following quotation from Hume: “The ancient Satirists often used great liberty in their expressions; but their freedom no more resembles this licentiousness, than the nakedness of an Indian does that of a common prostitute.” This attempt to defend the latitude of expression in his own style comes forward with a very bad grace after his animadversions on Mr. Pope. It is a partial vindication in himself, of what he censures in another. Though I am ready to admit the truth of the original proposition in the above quotation, yet in the inference which he derives from it I differ from him entirely, independent of the dislike I have to this partial manner of arguing against another about the propriety of a licence which he is defending in himself. That liberty of style which we discern in the ancient Satirists is not allowable to the same extent in the Satirists of the present day. The laws of Satire have, ever since Pope and Swift wrote, adopted a chaster language and a purer style. It is no argument therefore for the Satirist to say that he has only given the expressions of another; for, if they are licentious, he ought not to admit them at all. It is equally as indefensible as if a modest woman were to imitate the indecent gesture of a prostitute, though merely for the sake of describing what the other had done.

I pass over his Dissertation on the *Gibbe Cat*, with which he seems peculiarly pleased, as it affords him an opportunity of venting his jokes on the occasion; nor does he omit to add his own opinion, after he has found fault with all other commentators

mentators for so doing. Neither shall I dwell on his Observations on stewed Prunes and Potatoes; wherein he endeavours to equal (and with no small degree of envy it should appear) the length of Mr. Collins's Note, which he blames so severely, on the same subject. But there are two lines which I think it necessary to take some notice of; they are these :

“ For, ah ! presumptuous Acis wrests the prize,
 “ And ravishes the nymph before his eyes !”

This, together with the whole of the Notes upon it, I cannot but consider, judging according to his own system, as an allegorical indecency. It is not enough to say it is a mere allegory; so was Mr. Pope's story of “ The Double Mistress,” which he reprobates so much. It is incompatible with that strict chastity of expression which he requires in others. There is no one excuse to be offered for it: it is not even an imitation by way of stricture on the style of another, but a wanton and wilful indelicacy, without any reason, and to answer no end.

All this is the less allowable in an Author who comes forth, as he professes to do, in behalf of the Literature and the good manners of the country, with a full conviction of the tendency of his Poem to promote the public welfare. Does he mean to say that his Work is the model from which we are to learn perfection in both these instances? With regard to the first, he has not merely confined himself to a criticism on the faults—he has endeavoured to depreciate the abilities, as well as to undervalue the merits, of almost every other writer; but has he, at the same time, written better himself? Even the chastity of Pope's Works are questioned; but has he avoided, in his own, that licence of expression which he will not allow to another? And in point of good manners he sets but a bad example, if we are to imitate the gross abuse, the indecent invective, and the wilful misrepresentation, in the use of which
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he is so very liberal. Neither am I disposed to give him credit for that independence and impartiality to which he would fain lay claim. In many places, notwithstanding his repeated boastings to the contrary, he displays all the little narrowness and prejudice of party-influence ; and when he least thinks it, he betrays himself most. At times, when this is not the case, he is both pleasing and instructive in his remarks. There is one passage, in particular, to whose truth and propriety I cannot omit this opportunity of expressing my most cordial assent. It is upon the needless and cruel experiments that are made upon living animals. The observations are just, sensible, and humane. What can display a more striking instance of savage barbarity than to behold men, without the least commiseration for the acuteness of its sufferings, brooding with insatiable perseverance over a tortured and mutilated animal, and directing experiments with the most ingenious cruelty, wherein every possible refinement of invention is adopted that may heighten or prolong the agonies of the miserable victim, without any other end to be answered than the gratification of a useless though sanguinary curiosity? Such experiments are a disgrace to a civilized people.

From this I turn to another subject—his attack upon Mr. Lewis, the Author of the Romance called the “ Monk ;” and if I dwell on this a little longer than usual, it is because the Author of the “ Pursuits of Literature ” has not been more copious in his observations than profuse in the invective and misrepresentation with which he has overwhelmed that Gentleman.

There is no book perhaps of modern production that has excited a greater share of curiosity, or been more the subject of public opinion, and public conversation, than the Romance of the “ Monk.”

The Author of the “ Pursuits of Literature ” in particular has branded this work with the charge of obscenity and impiety, and accused Mr. Lewis of neither scrupling nor blushing

ing to depict and publish to the world the arts of lewd and systematic seduction, and to thrust upon the nation the most open and unqualified blasphemy against the very code and volume of our religion. In the accusation of indecency the public opinion, under which the author of the Pursuits of Literature has artfully endeavoured to shelter and support his own, does certainly in a great measure coincide with him; but it must be recollected, that *assertion*, although founded on the *popular opinion*, does not always amount to incontrovertible proof.

Here then it should seem the combat grows unequal, for I have two antagonists opposed to me, of which the latter is by no means the least powerful; and a man ought to possess no small share of courage and resolution, who ventures into the field to tilt his lance against so formidable an opponent as the *popular opinion*. In all probability his fate may bear too close a resemblance to the effect of the attack which the renowned Champion de la Mancha made against his enemies the windmills.

Yet this terrific monster loses a vast deal of its consequence when we come to consider it with attention, and analyze its respective parts. Of the people composing the public opinion there are two sorts; those who think for themselves ("et quota pars hæc sunt"), and those who suffer others to think for them. The former of these may again be divided into two classes; the first and by far least numerous of which consists of persons *able* to form an opinion of their own, and the latter of such as *without the ability* will assume to themselves the *power*. From this it appears then how small a share real judgment and discrimination have in constituting the popular opinion; which, nevertheless, it must be confessed, is too important an antagonist to be trifled with, and it is most prudent not to run counter to it if it can be avoided.

But as I wish not to dispute its power, though I question its propriety, and as I know its tenacity too well to entertain the

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the least supposition that any arguments will induce it to recede from its opinion when once formed ; I do not intend this by way of confuting it, but maintaining my own. I act upon the defensive, and not upon the offensive plan. I have not the vanity to suppose, whatever effect they might produce upon individuals, that my arguments could ever influence the public opinion ; but still I will not suffer my own to be trodden under foot. It is no argument to tell me the world is of a different opinion from myself. The world may be mistaken as well as I may. Not that I mean to divest *all* credit from the popular opinion ; which is very frequently infallible. But the opinion of the world, merely as an opinion, carries no more conviction to my mind than the opinion of an individual. They both may be right, for aught I know, or they both may be wrong. Of this, however, I am certain, that if I cannot make a convert of the public opinion, when I conceive it to be wrong, so neither shall it have any influence over me when I believe myself right. I will always pay it a due respect ; but a blind and unlimited submission is more than it has any right to expect from me.

I must confess, I never perused a book with so much surprise and astonishment as I did that of the " Monk ". Led to expect, from general report, a compound of licentious indecency, when I took it up to read, which was not till very lately, it was with all the prejudice that it was possible for my mind to entertain against it. How much was I astonished then to find the impressions it made on me so widely different from those I was taught to look for : I was ashamed to perceive that I had so long been the dupe to a prejudice which appeared to me to be without foundation ; and that, without any reason to authorise my forming an opinion at all, which I certainly could have no right to do till I had read the book, I had imperceptibly given way to the popular stream.

I am well aware of the difficulties I shall have now to encounter. I hear an immediate outcry raised against me—

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What !

What ! defend a bad book—a work of licentiousness and blasphemy ?—Have patience a little, gentle critics, and I will answer you. I do not pretend to defend a bad book—I join issue with you in your opinion. I do not believe this to be such—I do not view it as a licentious or blasphemous work—I do not think it will either contaminate your morals, or bring your religion into contempt.

With regard to the charge of licentiousness, the “ Monk ” exhibits, it is true, a picture of vice unequalled hitherto by the pen of description. But I would ask this short and simple question—*Is the picture of vice, held up in its own native deformity, a dangerous sight ?* I will add another—*Is it not attended with good effects, by acting as a beacon to mankind ?* Vice in itself is even disgusting to its most zealous votaries, when it entirely abandons the semblance of virtue. Would you allure mankind to the path of vice, you must not terrify them with a prospect of the rocks and precipices which intersect the way ; you must strew the path over with the flowers of virtue—you must make the surface smooth, to conceal the pits below. Vice must always wear a mask, or she will never gain converts to her principles : it is only when she arrays herself in the specious garb of virtue that she is to be feared.

There are prefixed to several of the editions of Roderick Random, some introductory observations, intitled, “ Remarks on Roderick Random, in a Letter from a Gentleman at Twickenham to his friend in London.” This letter has been attributed to Mr. Pope ; and I shall give a short extract from it here, as it is so extremely apposite to the present subject.

“ We further learn from this author, that *characters of vice*
 “ *may be made the most conducive to the promotion of virtue.* For
 “ though virtue is in herself absolutely amiable and attractive,
 “ when placed in a proper light, and remarked with due at-
 “ tention ; yet vice can assume her graces with so cunning a
 “ mimicry, that the detection must come from eyes of un-
 “ common discernment,

"It is in this material distinction that our author is happy. He strips vice of all that served to adorn or disguise her. He lifts her to the light. He exposes her native deformity. He gives her affectations to ridicule, and her allurements to detestation. He places her in opposition to her adversary; and, by a contrast so evident, demonstrates that nothing is beneficent, that nothing is desirable, but virtue."

A book which boldly traces the progress of vice, accompanying her in her first deviation from the path of virtue, through all her subsequent transitions to the different stages of guilt, and at length exhibits her suffering the punishment due to her crimes, cannot be justly styled a bad book. I consider the Romance of the "Monk" as a work of this nature—I see a good and useful moral to be drawn from it. I see that the first abandonment to vice leads on imperceptibly to an accumulation of wickedness. But I also see that such a conduct infallibly brings on the wretched victim the punishment due to his crimes. I view it as a beautiful allegory, wherein is depicted the snares and delusions by which vice accomplishes her triumph over virtue. The character of Matilda, for example, I consider as so palpably allegorical, that when I am reading it, it is with difficulty I can bring my mind to favour the deceit sufficiently enough to look upon her as a woman.

From the language made use of in the "Pursuits of Literature," a person unacquainted with the "Monk" would be induced to suppose that it was a character recommended as a model for imitation, rather than designed as an object of abhorrence. He would be surprised to find that his example was intended to inculcate the necessity of a proper distrust of ourselves, and the danger of placing too great a confidence in our own virtues, and above all to teach us that the suppression of our passions from their right and natural course, is too frequently the means of diverting them into a much more dangerous channel.

But, granting all this to be true, still it will be objected, why the necessity to introduce such licentiousness and obscenity, according to the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature," into the work? Might not the indecent passages, it will be said, have been as well omitted? In the first place then I must declare, that I do not see these *licentious*, these *obscene*, or these *indecent* passages, as they are called, in the same point of view that the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" represents them in. I cannot deny that the description of some of the scenes between Matilda and Ambrosio are painted in very strong colours. But, in my opinion, there was no remedy for it. Without these descriptions, the work, it is true, would have been chaster; but then it would have been incomplete as a work. It is to be considered that the Monk was *no common man*; therefore the common temptations of the world would have been lost upon him.—Not only from his habits of life were his religious principles tinged with a shade of a deeper cast than those of other men, but also from keeping his passions under command he had acquired a self-denial unknown to men in general. With such a man, therefore, whatever ideas the attractions of the other sex might excite, they would make a much slighter impression on him than on the rest of mankind. No common blandishments would prevail over him. Had his temptations been of an inferior nature, they never would have had effect. The usual artifices of women would have been exerted in vain. He was not to be prevailed on in the first instance to debauch others, but it is necessary he should be debauched himself. This Matilda effects by a conduct adapted to such an intent—She practises every refinement in the art of seduction, and allures his passions by temptations too strong for mortality to resist. If he had fallen a victim to less subtle snares, or yielded to less tempting allurements, his character had been at once ill drawn and incomplete.

Whence then the danger to be apprehended from the per-
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usal of this work?—The horror excited in the breast of the reader at the incantations and preternatural interferences by the aid of which the Monk is enabled to execute his infernal plans, is of itself a sufficient antidote to any emotions which the luscious description of some of the scenes could occasion, though I will not admit that they can produce any such. With weak minds, in particular, this cannot fail of having a very strong effect. Is it possible for any one to regard Matilda, after he has been a witness to her mysterious and unaccountable behaviour, without a suspicion bordering on disgust? Even the beauty of her person, and her blandishments, cease to affect the reader when he beholds her an agent in diabolical arts. And to the strong mind, capable of discrimination and of forming an opinion for itself, it can by no means be prejudicial. By such it will be considered as a perfect allegory, wherein is depicted the triumph of vice over virtue—and will be admired as a moral work, the effect of much ability and invention.

Had the author written his work in a different style, and on a different plan—had he drawn the Monk as successful in every one of his villainous undertakings, and shewn him as escaping the punishment due to his crimes—then I will confess it would have admitted of many objections that will not now hold good. But surely a description of progressive wickedness, which ultimately is arrested by the hand of justice, and delivered over to eternal punishment, cannot be a very dangerous lesson to mankind. You will gain few proselytes to vice, by exhibiting it as overwhelmed by the punishment due to its crimes. Who ever heard of a person being tempted to the highway by the sight of a criminal suffering on the wheel for a similar offence? Who ever heard of a person being stimulated to licentiousness by viewing another sinking under the pressure of a disease contracted in the habits of debauchery?

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There are many other books we daily meet with in general circulation, that, without appearing to be really bad, are attended with much more prejudicial consequences to mankind. The amours of Peregrine Pickle, or Tom Jones, and the Intrigues of Ferdinand Count Fathom, not to mention several other novels of the present day, are infinitely more dangerous for young people to study, because they are all effected in the common course of life. There is nothing but what every one may or can do himself. Every thing is confined within the scope and pale of possibility.—Thus the intrigue which Count Fathom carries on with the jeweller's daughter, Wilhelmina, excites the passions more forcibly than the account of Ambrosio's seduction by Matilda, because it is in a more natural manner that it is effected. And again, his conquest over the fair Elenor, and his seduction of Celinda, the daughter of the country gentleman to whose house he was invited after he comes to England, makes a stronger impression on the mind than the manner in which the Monk ruins Antonia: for the one is the mere effect of human cunning and contrivance, whereas the other is only accomplished by the aid of preternatural intervention: and I leave it to the judgment of the reader to determine which is most likely to have a pernicious operation on the human mind—the description of an intrigue carried on with a girl in the common and usual manner, with no other inconvenience attending it than the danger of the lovers being interrupted in the hours of dalliance—or the account of a seduction, not only accompanied with every species of horror and barbarity, but effected by the co-operation of the most diabolical arts and infernal mysteries. The mind is too apt to view the one with a kind of sympathy: it makes it its own case: it feels it could do the same if it wished it; and perhaps it is even induced to wish it:—but from the other it shrinks with abhorrence, and loathes the idea of imitation. Where is the person bold enough to entertain for a moment
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the idea of gratifying his passions by the celebration of infernal rites? Who would suffer Satan to conduct him to the couch of Venus?

Taking it indeed in any shape, I do not see how the alleged dangerous tendency of this book is to be supported on any reasonable grounds. On a strong and well-informed mind it is not even pretended that it can work any ill effects; because it must be viewed by such as a beautiful allegory decorated with all the imagery of a fertile imagination. But with weak minds we are told this is not the case, as they are incapable of viewing it with the discrimination that is necessary for them. In answer to this my opinion is, that a weak and uninformed mind stands in no more danger than a strong one: for, supposing the allegorical allusion above their comprehension, still the moral inference to be drawn from it cannot but be obvious, namely, that vice, though for a time successful, meets with its due punishment at last. Yet should this even not be conceded to me, still I believe I shall not be contradicted when I assert, that a *diablerie*, and the narration of magic rites, makes a much deeper impression on a weak than on a strong mind, and hence I argue that the book contains a sufficient antidote in itself. Were it possible for me to suppose for a moment that the perusal of the "Monk" could induce a person, by the incitement of ideas he never before experienced, to attempt the execution of any plan of seduction, or even the gratification in any manner of a sensual passion, in consequence of what he had read therein, I would cease to vindicate it from that moment. But I beg to ask whether it is rational to suppose, that, if the mind could divest itself of all the horror occasioned by the manner in which the designs of the Monk are carried into execution, and even experience those sensations of incitement which I defy the book to inspire—whether, I say, the head could for a moment become so much the dupe of the passions as to attempt, from the example of Ambrosio, to do what it must

must perceive, without the same preternatural assistance, it never could achieve.

For, if it is impossible for any, the most ignorant and uninformed reader, to place the slightest belief in the reality of the facts that are related therein, which I apprehend must be answered in the affirmative, how can a person receive any bad impressions from the perusal of facts which he is convinced never did nor can take place? Do you say it is a bad example for him? I answer, that cannot operate as an example which he is sensible he cannot follow if he were even so inclined.

It is no vindication of an indecent book, I am aware, because another happens to be more so; but I cannot refrain from observing, that it is not a little extraordinary that the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" should have selected this book in particular for the object of his animadversions, when there are such a number to whom reprehension is so much more deservedly due. Besides, it is paying the female part of mankind a very ill compliment, to suppose for a moment that they could not read such a book without receiving bad impressions from it. It is not only an insult to their understandings, but it is a reflection on their delicacy, their susceptibility, and their natural timidity, to entertain such an idea. It is supposing them no less incapable of reflection, than destitute of all female innocence, as well as deaf to all the dictates of horror and disgust with which such a narration cannot fail to inspire them.

Considering it again in a political point of view, there is even much good may be derived from it. There is a worldly caution, a distrust of the ingratiating arts of designing villainy, to be gained in the perusal of it. What! perhaps I may be told—a knowledge of human nature to be obtained from the behaviour of a demon? Would you draw lessons of moral prudence from the application of the wickedness of a preternatural

natural being? Have patience a little, whosoever thou art that wouldst hint this objection, and, out of tenderness to thy own arguments, press it not against me, or thou wilt defeat at once all thy assertions of the immoral tendency of this book : for, if thou deniest me the application of the conduct of a demon as a lesson for the instruction of mankind, and wilt not suffer me to make a comparison between mortals and preternatural beings, so neither will I suffer thee to insinuate that a finite being like man can receive any injury from an examination of the diabolical arts of a minister of the devil. If you deny me the power of a comparison for the benefit of mankind, so will I deny you, on your own grounds, the power of drawing an injurious analogy between them. If you tell me, that the history of a preternatural being cannot operate by analogy, by comparison, or by inference, as a lesson of instruction to mankind, you surely will not pretend to say that by either of those methods it can prove of any prejudice.

And yet Mr. Lewis is accused of having poisoned the waters of our land in their springs and fountains—He is branded with having added incitement to incitement, and corruption to corruption, till there neither is, nor can be, a return to virtuous action and to regulated life—Yes, forsooth, he is accused of all this, because he has held up to the world a picture of vice in its native deformity, and taught them this wholesome lesson, that the sword of justice hangs over the head of the wicked. Mr. Lewis is cited “before the tribunal of the public opinion, to answer to the law of reputation, and every “binding and powerful sanction by which that law is enforced;” because he has told mankind, that the first step to vice is generally followed by a second, and that second by a third, which sooner or later infallibly leads to the punishment which it deserves ; because he has shewn us we may be wicked when we please, but has pointed out the consequences ; and because he has demonstrated to us, that if we once quit the path of virtue, it is difficult to regain it, and that we become

imperceptibly involved too deep to recede when we would wish it.

But the accusations against him stop not even here. I come now to a charge of a much more serious nature, both in itself and its consequences; an offence of the most enormous magnitude that the wickedness of man is capable of perpetrating, that of open and unqualified blasphemy against the very code and volume of our religion. And here it may be right to observe, that whatever support the assertion of the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature," with regard to the licentious tendency of the "Monk," may derive from the coincidence of the popular opinion with him in that respect, in the charge of blasphemy and impiety he stands by himself solely and unsupported. That accusation, I believe, has never entered into the imagination of any individual but himself.

Far be it from me to attempt or wish to extenuate such a charge, if well founded. Never shall the blasphemer of our religion meet with a vindicator in me! But I frankly own I do not, for one, see the blasphemy of which the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" complains. I would have every one "approach the sacred writings with that prostration of mind, that distrust of their own powers, and that self-abasement which is required in those who desire to look into the hidden things of God." I know nothing of Mr. Lewis, not even by report. I never heard his name till I read his book; and as for his religious principles, I have no other clue to guide me in my opinion of them than what I could collect from the perusal of his work. From that I see no reason to doubt him to be a man of religion and morality. I may be mistaken, it is true: I only declare what I think, and my motives for so thinking.

The charge of blasphemy, however, it is to be observed, is founded upon a passage which the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" has quoted from the "Monk," and which, after his example, I shall likewise give here.

"He

" He (the Monk) examined the book which she (Antonia)
 " had been reading, and had now placed upon the table. It
 " was the Bible. ' How ! ' said the Prior to himself, ' Antonia
 " reads the Bible, and is still so ignorant ? ' But upon further
 " inspection he found that Elvira (the mother of Antonia) had
 " made exactly the same remark. That prudent mother, while
 " she admired the beauties of the Sacred Writings, was con-
 " vinced that, unrestricted, no reading more improper could be
 " permitted a young woman. Many of the narratives can only
 " tend to excite ideas the worst calculated for a female breast :
 " every thing is called roundly and plainly by its own name ;
 " and the annals of a brothel would scarcely furnish a greater
 " choice of indecent expressions. Yet this is the book which
 " young women are recommended to study, which is put into
 " the hands of children able to comprehend little more than
 " those passages of which they had better remain ignorant, and
 " which but too frequently inculcate the first rudiments of vice,
 " and give the first alarm to the still sleeping passions. Of this
 " Elvira was so fully convinced, that she would have preferred
 " putting into her daughter's hands *Amadis de Gaul*, or the
 " valiant champion *Tirante the White*; and would sooner have
 " authorised her studying the lewd exploits of *Don Galaor*, or
 " the lascivious jokes of the damsel *Plazer de mi vida* *."

Had Mr. Lewis shewn me his book, and asked my opinion
 of it before it was printed, I would most certainly have ad-
 vised him either to amend or leave out this exceptionable pas-
 sage. I confess I wish he had not written it. But why do I
 so wish? Not because I think he has been guilty of blas-
 phemy; not because I think he has intended to "discredit and
 "traduce the authority of the Bible;" but because I should
 have foreseen that passage as not only liable to objections on
 the score of a want of sufficient decency and reverence in the
 manner of expression, which I am ready to admit, but also as
 raising many cavils, and lying open to many interpretations,

* Vol. ii. p. 247, 8.

which I do not believe ever entered into the writer's imagination. For it was not enough that he did not design nor imagine any impiety himself, he ought also to have considered what effect his language would have upon another person, and that he should not afterwards have to say of any ill-natured caviller, ἕτως ὅξέως ἐμὲ κατεῖδεν ὥστε ἀσεβείας ἐγραψάτο*.

At the same time also it may be necessary to observe, that, in defending Mr. Lewis, I by no means am to be understood as pledging my opinion in every instance for the support of his own. There may be many things wherein I do not exactly coincide with him, I acknowledge; but I do not write to support every particular tenet which he lays down, and every individual expression of which he makes use. I write to defend him, generally, from the charge of obscenity and blasphemy, which I do not think he is guilty of.

Without questioning the divine inspiration of the Sacred Writings, I believe it will be at once conceded to me, that they exhibit a no less perfect description of times past, than a prophetic allusion to future events. Now, in the faithful representation they contain of former periods, we meet alike with a description of moral and immoral actions, of good and of bad men. Human nature is depicted with all the virtues and all the vices incident to it; and it is in the rewards conferred on the one, and the punishments annexed to the other, that we are taught to admire the wisdom and justice of the Almighty power. From the description of recorded vices which we meet with therein, whose atrocity is only equalled by the degree of vengeance which they excite, and the relation of events as we find them in the plain and forcible language of truth and simplicity, unobscured by the sophistry of words, unrefined by the subtlety of terms, I cannot for myself conceive that youth stand in any danger; but I have more charity than to accuse my neighbour of blasphemy because he

* Plato, Euthyph.

thinks otherwise. May there not be many a religious person, I would ask, equally impressed with a due respect for the religious writings, and a sense of the divine inspiration which accompanies them, who might still wish to withhold certain passages in them from a daughter's eye? May there not be many a person of unquestionable sanctity, who would think themselves innocent of every blasphemous intention, or desire of traducing the Bible, in their preventing a young and unknowing female from perusing the story of Dinah, or closing the book when they came to the account of the incestuous commerce between Lot and his two daughters? They would not, I am persuaded, feel conscious of any impiety in endeavouring to conceal expressions which they thought not well calculated to meet the delicacy of the mind of a young female, incapable both from her age and her want of judgment of considering the Sacred Writings in the manner they require; and I am sure I would be the last to accuse such a person of blasphemy, because I did not think in every particular as he did.

How little too does it accord with the allegation of a tendency to discredit and traduce the Bible, when we see it placed in the hands of Antonia, the most innocent and virtuous character in the book, by Elvira, her own mother.

I scruple not therefore openly to acquit Mr. Lewis of every *impious or blasphemous intention*. His meaning I cannot believe to be bad, though, with regard to the above extract, I think he has been inattentive to a sufficient decency and decorum in the manner of his expressing his ideas; and I am always willing to make every allowance for an author who appears to have been so injudicious as to have adopted expressions which will admit of a force of interpretation beyond what he intended they should bear. This I believe to be Mr. Lewis's case, and as such I step forward in his defence. It is what I owe to another, because I should expect the same assistance myself. We all know there are two ways for expressing the
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same ideas; and the difference of the words will always allow of a different construction. Nothing therefore is more requisite in an author than to weigh well, and with attention, the various meaning and purport of the words of which he makes use, and in the selection of which he cannot be too careful.

The Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" is as ready as any one to make this allowance himself when it suits his purpose, as is evident by the following passage in a Note to the Preface of the Fourth Part of his Work, where, speaking of Mr. Reeves, who, he tells us, is in his opinion a very virtuous and a very honourable man, he says, "It would not be amiss, to be sure, if Mr. Reeves, or any other writer, would read Quintilian on Tropes and Metaphors, before he adorns his native language with all the richness of imagery, and exerts the command which nature gives him over the figures of speech. *Trunco non frondibus efficit umbram.*" For my own part, when his pamphlet, "The Thoughts on the English Government," was published, I never felt more indignation than when I saw this Gentleman ungenerously and shamefully abandoned, and given up by Mr. Pitt in the House of Commons to the malice of his avowed enemies, and to a criminal prosecution in the Court of King's Bench. He was solemnly acquitted of any *libellous intention*; but his language was imprudent. He fell a victim to metaphorical luxuriance and state botany." I claim for Mr. Lewis a similar indulgence with that which the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" so readily concedes to Mr. Reeves. I wish an equal allowance to be made him for the *imprudence* of his language, and that his words may not be ungenerously construed into meanings which he never intended they should bear. That they are imprudent, as well as irreverent and indecorous, I admit; but this is the distinction which I wish to prove, that the only fault of the Author consists in having used too strong expressions, and not in the *tendency* of his work.

I am by no means a friend to the principle of damning a work, from one exceptionable passage which it may contain ; nor would I bind down the intentions of the Author to the meaning of a few injudicious words. In general, both the moral and religious principles which we meet with throughout the "Monk" are good and unexceptionable. In the sophistical arguments particularly, which Matilda applies to the Monk, I see reason to give the Author credit for much ingenuity, inasmuch as notwithstanding they sometimes may delude him, yet we find them constantly fail of conviction, and shew by their own weakness and fallacy, though pressed with the utmost artfulness, and in the most specious shape in which it is possible to put them, the strength and justice of those principles they are designed to combat and oppose.

The fair and only way to judge, with any degree of accuracy, of the respective merits and faults of a work, is not from partial extracts, but by an unprejudiced consideration of the whole. We shall find in many books certain passages, which, considered abstractedly, and by themselves, are liable to objections that will vanish immediately when we compare them with the general scope and tenets of the work : and it is an easy matter to make selections from almost every author on which to found strong grounds for cavilling, though certainly it is neither a mark of candour nor justice so to do. We should always bear in our minds what the great Sidney said before his Judges, upon hearing the interpretations that were given upon selected passages of his writings : " At this rate " ye may prove any thing ; judging as ye do in this partial way, " I would undertake to prove, from the very words of the " Bible, that there is no God."

Thus the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" confines his general charge of blasphemy, with which he brands the whole work, to a partial extract taken from *two* of the pages ; and his accusation of obscenity does not extend beyond as many chapters. There cannot be much difficulty, according
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to this rule, to decry a work, if, shutting our eyes to the general aim, scope, and context of it, we are to found a partial argument upon passages which we have selected for the express purpose.

But although I have admitted that there exists a very strong prejudice against this book, I ought also in justice at the same time to add, that the public opinion is not without many exceptions in its favour. There are numbers of persons of both sexes, with enlightened minds and strong abilities, acquainted with the world, and with a perfect knowledge of human nature, not less capable than willing to form an opinion of their own, and with sufficient resolution to think for themselves, who without hesitation acknowledge that they do not consider the "Monk" as either a dangerous or improper work. I have known that men of exalted stations, and a high sense of the laws of decency and decorum—men impressed with a due respect for religion, and the moral obligations of life—men who were "Legislators in our Parliament, Members of the House of Commons of Great Britain, and Defenders of the laws, the religion, and good manners of the country," have neither scrupled nor blushed to put the "Monk" into the hands of their wives and daughters, without the least apprehension of any possible harm to accrue from it.

Hitherto, it is to be observed, I have been speaking of the "Monk" as it stands in the first edition that was printed. In compliance with the general opinion, Mr. Lewis has in a late edition omitted the exceptionable passages, and sacrificed his own judgment at the shrine of Public Taste. This edition therefore is chaster in expression, and *false delicacy* perhaps will applaud the corrections that have been made: yet even in this modified state the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" has reiterated his objections to it; and although in its former condition they were confined to certain passages, he now finds out that the *tenor of the whole* is reprehensible, notwithstanding his former assertion that the work as a composition would receive

ceive great advantage from the omission of those passages in another edition.

There is a story to be met with in the Turkish Tales, which in the outlines of the plan resembles extremely the Romance of the "Monk," and from which indeed Mr. Lewis acknowledges to have borrowed some of the ideas in his work :—as it is not very long, I shall give it here :—

The History of the Santon Barfisa.

THERE was formerly a Santon, named Barfisa, who for the space of an hundred years very fervently applied himself to prayer, and scarce ever went out of the grotto in which he resided for fear of exposing himself to the danger of offending God. He fasted in the day-time, and he watched in the night. All the inhabitants of the country had such a great veneration for him, and so highly valued his prayers, that they commonly applied to him when they had any favour to beg of Heaven. When he made vows for the health of a sick person, the patient was immediately cured.

It happened that the daughter of the king of that country fell into a dangerous distemper, the cause of which the physicians in vain attempted to discover, and continued prescribing remedies which, so far from curing, only augmented the disease. In the mean time the king was inconsolable for his daughter, whom he passionately loved. Wherefore, one day, when he found all other assistance in vain, he declared it as his opinion, that the princess ought to be sent to the Santon Barfisa to try what effect his prayers would have upon her.

All the beys applauded this resolution of the king, and accordingly his officers conducted the princess to the Santon, who, notwithstanding his frozen age, could not behold such a beauty without being sensibly moved. He gazed on her with pleasure; and the devil, taking this opportunity, whispered in his ear thus: "O Santon! do not let such a fortunate opportunity pass away. Tell the king's servants that it is requisite

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for the princess to pass this night in the grotto, to see whether it will please God to cure her; that you will put up your prayers for her, and that they need only come and fetch her to-morrow."

How weak is man!—the Santon followed the devil's advice, and did what he suggested to him. But the officers, before they would yield to his request and leave the princess; sent one of their number to know the king's pleasure. That monarch, who had an entire confidence in Barsifa, did not in the least scruple to trust his daughter with him—"I consent," said he, "that she stay with that holy man, and that he keep her as long as he pleases: I am wholly satisfied on that head."

When the officers had received this answer from the king, they all retired, and the princess remained alone with the hermit. Night being come, the devil presented himself to the Santon, saying, "Canst thou let slip so favourable an opportunity with so charming a creature? Fear not her telling of the violence you offer her; if she were even so indiscreet as to reveal it, who will believe her? The court, the city, and all the world are too much prepossessed in your favour, to give any credit to such a report. You may do any thing unpunished, when armed by the great reputation for sanctity which you have acquired." The unfortunate Barsifa was so weak as to hearken to the enemy of mankind. He approached the princess, took her into his arms, and in a moment cancelled a virtue of an hundred years duration.

He had no sooner perpetrated his crime, than he was haunted with a thousand avenging horrors. He thus accosts the devil: "O wretch! 'tis thou which hast destroyed me! thou hast encompassed me for a whole age, and endeavoured to seduce me; and now at last thou hast gained thy end."—"O Santon," answered the devil, "do not reproach me with the pleasure thou hast enjoyed. Thou mayest repent:—but what is unhappy for thee is that the princess will become pregnant, and thy sin will be made public: thou wilt become the laughing-stock of those
who

who admire and reverence thee at present, and the king will put thee to an ignominious death."

Barfisa, terrified by this discourse, says to the devil, "What shall I do to prevent my shame being made public?"—"To hinder the knowledge of your crime, you ought to commit a fresh one," answered the devil: "kill the princess; bury her at the corner of the grotto; and when the king's officers come to-morrow, tell them you have cured her, and that she went from the grotto very early in the morning."

The hermit, abandoned by God, pursuant to this advice killed the princess, buried her in a corner of the grotto, and the next day told the officers what the devil bid him say. They made diligent enquiry after the king's daughter; but being unable to hear any thing of her, despaired of finding her again; when the devil told them that all their search for the princess was in vain, and, relating what had passed between her and the Santon, described to them the place where she was interred. The officers immediately went to the grotto, seized Barfisa, and found the body of the princess in the very spot to which the devil had directed them; whereupon they took up the corpse, and carried that and the Santon to the palace.

When the king saw his daughter dead, and was informed of the whole event, he broke out into tears and bitter lamentations; and, assembling the doctors, he laid the Santon's crime before them, and asked their advice how he should be punished. All the doctors condemned him to death; upon which the king ordered him to be hanged. Accordingly a gibbet was erected: the hermit went up the ladder; and when he was on the point of being turned off, the devil whispered these words in his ear: "O Santon! if you will worship me, I will extricate you out of this difficulty, and transport you two thousand leagues from hence into a country where you shall be revered by men as much as you were before this adventure."—"I am content," says Barfisa: "deliver me, and I will

worship-thee."—"Give me first a sign of adoration," replies the devil: whereupon the Santon bowed his head, and said, "I give myself to you." The devil then raising his voice, said, "O Barfisa! I am satisfied; I have obtained what I desired:" and with these words, spitting in his face, he disappeared, and the deluded Santon was hanged.

The strong resemblance between this story and the "Monk" will be immediately perceptible to every reader; and yet hear in what terms the *Guardian*, whose love of morality, of decency, and of religion, will be allowed at least equal to that of the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature," speaks of this very history: "This short tale," he says, "gave me a great many serious reflections. The very same fable may fall into the hands of a great many men of wit and pleasure, who, 'tis probable, will read it with their usual levity; but since it may as probably divert and instruct a great many persons of plain and virtuous minds, I shall make no scruple of making it the entertainment of this day's paper. The moral to be drawn from it is entirely Christian, and is so very obvious that I shall leave to every reader the pleasure of picking it out for himself."

I shall dismiss this subject now by declaring, as I have already done, that it is not my intention to defend a licentious and immoral book, or vindicate a blasphemous one. "All heedless of proud fashion's sneer," I have ventured to give my reasons for conceiving the "Monk" to be neither the one nor the other. I lay, however, no greater claim to infallibility of opinion than any other. I may be wrong; and if so, I shall always be open to conviction when I am made sensible of it; but at least I hope, if I am wrong, I shall have credit for an error in judgment solely. Whether or not my arguments on this subject will appear equally satisfactory to others as they are to myself, is more than I can pretend to form an opinion about: such as they are I have openly stated

them ; but I cannot help repeating, that I think Mr. Lewis has been unfairly dealt with in the attack made upon him by the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature," which is not only unjust and ungenerous, but ungentlemanly to the last degree.

There are various other passages in the "Pursuits of Literature" that are open to equal censure, were I disposed to go into them. The few which I have selected are, I think, sufficient to establish my former assertion, that the effect and assigned intention of the work do but ill accord together. To say that it is devoid of all merit, would be unjust in the extreme. I have not said so. I must and do give the Author credit for a great share of ability and learning, and I respect not more the extent of his knowledge and the depth of his classical researches, than I am at times delighted with his wit and pleasantry ; for that he is not devoid of either I must contend, although his attempt at the former is too often attended with low buffoonery, as well as the want of the latter supplied with vulgar jokes. But his work is mixed with too large a portion of alloy, which casts a sombre shade over the real merit of it ; and the few passages deserving of applause are lost in the mass of abuse, scurrility, egotism, pedantry, ill-nature, and egregious misrepresentation, by which they are surrounded. Notwithstanding his conviction of the tendency of his Poem to promote the public welfare, I cannot acquiesce with him in that opinion ; nor can I see how either the literature, the laws, the religion, the government, or the good manners of the country are to derive any possible advantage from a work whose sole object seems to be to ridicule and depreciate genius and learning of every denomination, and to lower the professors of them in the public esteem.

However severe these criticisms, or any of them, may appear, yet I trust that on examination they will be found just and correct ; at least they lay claim to the most perfect disinterestedness. I hope also I may add, in the words of
Xeno-

Xenophon *, *Ευρίσσις δὲ καὶ σὺ ἢν ὀρθῶς λογίζῃ, ἐμὲ ἀληθῆ λέγοντα.*
 Who the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature" may be, I shall not attempt to conjecture. I write this opinion of his work, whoever he is ; but I do not desire to know the man.

In the introductory epistle to a friend, prefixed to the last edition of his work, he complains that he is represented as having threatened any person who makes inquiry after him or his name. It was not his intention so to do, he tells us, when he made use of the following expression, "*it will be more than foolish to be very inquisitive.*" He has explained this, I allow ; and I give him due credit for the ingenuity of his explanation. But I wish he would also explain what he means by this passage, wherein he says, " I dissuade every person from flippant and random application of any supposed name ; it is as unjust, as it is absurd. *Flebit et insignis toto cantabitur urbe*, was said of old. I do not say this ; but I recommend to every Gentleman and Lady of eminent sagacity and curiosity to remember, *that there is a darkness which may be felt.*" Perhaps he will also deny that this is a threat. If so, I only ask what he calls it ? Be that as it may, he is perfectly secure from my conjectures or inquiries after him ; and his admonitions or threats on that point are equally needless. Indeed I am much disposed to agree with him in his assertion, " that neither his name, nor his situation in life, will ever be revealed ;" for such as have the meanness to do mischiefs in the dark, have seldom the courage to justify them in the face of day †.

He might therefore as well have spared himself the repeated protestations of secrecy which he makes upon this subject. He would not have been suspected of imitating the example of Nisus, and publicly avowing,

" Me, me ; adsum qui feci ; in me convertite ferrum,
 " O Rutuli ! mea fraus omnis—" ‡

* Xen. de Cyri Instit. l. ii. p. 97. ed. Hutch. oct.

† Pope's Letters.

‡ Virg. Æn. l. ix. v. 427.

His enterprize is certainly of an "hazardous nature," *Tutius est fictis igitur contendere verbis*—and, as far as depends upon his preserving it a secret, will, there is no doubt, ever remain one; though I differ in opinion with him as to his being too insignificant to expect any comment on his own writings but from his own pen. So far from it, I think there are many passages deserving of much comment; and, if his name were known, I should not even be surprised to hear that that most weighty and irresistible of all arguments, the *argumentum baculinum*, had, amongst others, been made use of for that purpose.

It is not improbable that some enquiry also may be made by the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature," in his turn, who I am. But I shall use no threats to intimidate him: my advice, however, is, "*Fuge quærere!*" for it will be in vain—*Stat nominis umbra*. I might add, and, I think, without incurring the imputation of vanity, *haud sum malè notus*. At present I shall avail myself of the example which he has set me, "*ire per excubias et se committere nocti*." It is the safest way to encounter an anonymous assassin in the dark, and foil him, if it is practicable, with his own weapons, *ἑαυτον ἐοῖς βελέεσσι δαμάζειν*. I shall remain, therefore, invisible and unknown, that the contest may not be too unequal: but I make no promise that my name shall never be revealed.

After the example of Horace and Ovid, who have been accused of no small portion of vanity for the manner in which they have each of them sung the praises of their respective works, in the "*Exegi Monumentum*" of the one, and the "*Jamque opus exegi*" of the other; so the Author of the "Pursuits of Literature," with an equal share of confidence, though I cannot say with equal elegance of style, has celebrated the praises and perpetuity of his own production. From this specimen of his prediction I am not much disposed to place any belief in his ability for vaticination. I cannot
say

say of him in this instance, *πρὸς τὸ αἰδιον ἔσται*; and though a Poet and a Prophet might formerly be synonymous terms, he has given me good reason to doubt their being so now. What opinion another age will form of his work I will not undertake to say: I am by no means convinced it will ever travel so long a journey; for I cannot help thinking that, when every personal motive is expired which now renders it an object of interest to the Public, it will stand in need of a "*carmen exequiale*" to be pronounced over its manes: and if hereafter posterity are to derive the only knowledge of "how we wrote and thought in this age, and conducted ourselves," from no other channel than this Poem, I much fear they will remain totally ignorant on that subject.

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